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MARK ALEXANDER AND HIS ANCESTRY

Extracts from a letter written by Honorable Mark Alexander, of Mecklenburg Co., Va., to Honorable Hugh Blair Grigsby, of Charlotte Co., Va., July 2, 1876. Now in possession of Herbert F. Hutcheson, Clerk of Mecklenburg Co., Va.

"My ancestors were from Scotland and were Presbyterians. About the time of James the 1st and the Charleses they were persecuted on account of their religion and fled to Ireland. They were persecuted there, and concluded to form a colony and migrate to America.

They settled on the head of Elk in Maryland, some of them moved to Penn., while others remained about Baltimore. Some of those in Penn. afterwards went to the western part of N. C., chiefly in Mecklenburg Co. (from 1737 to 1745) Foote's *History N. C.*, act. of Presbyterian Church. They were Scotch-Irish.

Abram Alexander, chairman of the meeting in that county which declared their Independence on May 20th, 1775, was the uncle of my father. My father had three brothers, Nathaniel, William, Julius and Wallace, whom you will find mentioned in Wheeler's *History of N. C.* Nathaniel was a graduate of Princeton, studied medicine, was elected to Congress in 1804, & in 1805 was elected Gov. N. C. Wm. J. & Wallace were lawyers. My father, the youngest, was sent to a celebrated Academy called "Liberty Hall," an Act. of which is given in Foote's *History of N. C.* connected with the Church Govt. When he left he was given a certificate of good scholarship, the only kind of degree conferred. His eldest brother inherited the estate under the regal Govt. At the desire of an uncle in Baltimore he was sent to him, he soon entered the army and in the battle at Germantown, when an uncle in whose Co. he was, was killed. After the war his uncle, a large ship owner, whose vessels had been captured in the *quasi* war with France, sent him there to look after his interest. Upon the death of his uncle he came & settled in this County, Mecklenburg, Va., as a merchant. Married my mother, who was Miss Bugg, and who died soon after my birth. He was in the Legislature in 1798 & 1799 and was an Elector on the Monroe Ticket both terms of his election. He died 27th July 1824, aged 64, in Mecklenburg Co., Va.

I was born the 7th of Feb. 1792 in Mecklenburg Co., Va., sent to school when seven years old, was taught the rudiments of Latin in the common school of the Country, sent to an Academy 1805 & 1806 in Louisville, N. C., Matthew Dickenson, principal, a graduate of Yale. In 1807 I entered the University of N. C., half advanced in the freshman class, left in 1810 half advanced in the senior class, no one graduating owing to a disturbance in college, obtained license to practise law, elected to the Legislature in 1815, continued four years. In 1819 elected to Congress continued to spring 1833, when I declined having married June 1st, 1831.

When I first went to Washington I messed with Tyler Johnson of Norfolk, Severn E. Parker, Gen. Waller Taylor, Senator from Indiana, (raised in Lunenburg Co.) and a coz. of Mr. Tazewell, the next winter I messed with Macon, Randolph, Edwards, Benton, Cobb, Tatnall of Ga., where I remained until near the close of my public life. My room was facing Mr. Randolph, with whom I had formed intimate and confidential association, often acting as his amanuensis, and when abroad sending me papers & documents through Hamilton Fish of N. Y., I presume the present of Sec. of State. I often resorted to his room day and night to hear his conversational powers, replete with wisdom & instruction. I am proud to say I had his confidence to the day of his death. Benton, who roomed near him, was always reserved, with no intimate association or friendship but always master of the subject he discussed, and whose lamp never went out at night till one or two o'clock. Mr. Macon was a man of no literary attainments, being bred in the Revolution. He spoke but little in the latter part of his life, but always in plain language & to the purpose, with no pretention to eloquence, but no one ever left Senate with a higher reputation for sound judgment & purity of character—a second George Mason. Mr. Randolph always spoke of him as the wisest man he ever knew. As evidence of his friendship, he sent me upon dying a razor & walking cane. In the first session of congress when I entered the Tariff question came up, it was a new subject upon which parties had not been formed and was fully debated. Being the youngest member of the body I think, I in the early part of the discussion ventured to make my maiden speech in opposition, upon the principles of Smith, Richards, Say &c.

In 1824 it was again discussed when Mr. Webster made a great speech in opposition. He afterwards changed his views.

In 1827 it was again brought up, called the Bill of Abominations, when Mr. Tazewell said to Van Buren, who had induced him to vote for certain articles to render it obnoxious, that he Van Buren might vote against it, but voted for it, 'Sir, I have been deceived once—that was your fault, the next time it shall be mine.' On this occasion I made the 1st constitutional speech ever delivered upon the subject during our convention. Mr. Giles desired me to send him several copies which he placed in his book of miscellanies and presented them to me.

I served several sessions as chairman of the Comt. in District of Columbia. I made the 1st. report against the abolition of slavery in the same upon constitutional grounds. It was adopted by the House by a large majority. I was afterwards placed on the Com. of ways & means & made the minority report in 1831 & 32 against the Bank of U. S.

Signed. MARK ALEXANDER.

[Mark Alexander was the son of Mark Alexander and his wife, Lucy Bugg, daughter of Jacob Bugg, of Mecklenburg Co., Va. He died in Scotland Neck, Halifax Co., N. C., October 7, 1883. He married Sallie P. Turner, daughter of Governor James Turner, of North Carolina.]